

PRESS INFO/FEATURE

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PORT DICKSON, CHARMING SEASIDE TOWN



Growing up reading Enid Blyton's Famous Five adventures, I always imagined that the Malaysian equivalent to those English seaside locations could be found in Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan. Just 90 minutes' drive away from Kuala Lumpur, Port Dickson had all the necessary geographical landmarks for adventure: secluded beaches, a lighthouse, mangrove swamps, jungle and more!

This seaside town on the west coast of Malaysia was especially popular among holiday-makers in the 1980s. Seaside beach houses were easy to rent to accommodate entire families and although there wasn't plenty else to do, the refreshing air, the long, quiet beaches were enough to fill a weekend getaway there. And for a little girl who spent most of her school holidays there, it was the perfect place from which to cook up great imaginary adventures!

The Early Years

For many, Port Dickson would always be remembered as a beach destination. Historically, though, it began as a small Malay fishing village and trading post called Tanjung. There are some references to Port Dickson as "Arang" as well, probably due to a small coal mine in the vicinity. But Port Dickson really began to prosper during the time that a high-ranking British officer by the name of Sir John Frederick Dickson was posted there in the 1880s.

Leveraging on Arang's industrial boom and the surrounding area's commercial potential, Dickson turned the area into a deep-water port to serve ships from Singapore and Port Klang, later adding on a railroad system of 39km to Sungai Ujong, or what is now known as Seremban. The development of such an extensive transportation infrastructure required the labour of many men, and the British authorities brought in a workforce from India to fulfill this



ambition. The completion of the railroad system brought about a formal name change from Tanjung to Port Dickson and boosted the town's standing as a major trading hub of spice, rice, tapioca, and tin, the last being from Sungai Ujong.

It wasn't long after that the existing infrastructure and growth potential of Port Dickson began to attract the interest of international oil giants the likes of Shell, who, in 1901, set up its petroleum refinery there.

Seaside Charm

Despite Port Dickson's economic transformation, it was the calming breeze of the sea that really brought the public to its shores. The charm of a seaside resort – and one that was just a mere 1 ½ hours away from Kuala Lumpur – easily won the hearts of many hardened city dwellers. Even today, many still prefer a quick drive to Port Dickson to enjoy a weekend away from the city traffic.

The choice of hotels, restaurants and things to do are wide and varied compared to several decades ago, and this is thanks to the Government's effort to upgrade the facilities and services there. Over the years, heavy investments have been channeled into Port Dickson, elevating it into a resort town with five-star hotel accommodations, spa facilities, and park and recreational centres. A major highway was constructed in the 1990s to shorten the travel time between Seremban and Port Dickson, the 30-minute drive offering a breezier alternative to Federal Route 53.

Tourism promotions have also leveraged on Port Dickson as a bird watching paradise. The small town's population swells each year during the Raptor Watch weekend (usually the first weekend of March), a festival by Malaysian Nature Society, to celebrate the return of the migratory birds of prey or better known as raptors on their journey back to their breeding grounds in the northern hemisphere.

Stretching over 18km of the Negeri Sembilan coastline, Port Dickson has many beaches – some popularly frequented by the locals and others still a secret from many. One of the better ones is Pantai Cahaya Negeri (between 5th and 6th mile of the coastal road) with its fine white sands. For further explorations, take the wooden footbridge to the nearby mangrove island. Hugely popular is Pantai Teluk Kemang with its orange-hued sands and wide expanse of beach – great for strolls, kite-flying and camping. A nearby park, shopping and food stalls complete the facilities here.

On Dry Land

There are several worthy attractions around Port Dickson to fill up a visitor's weekend. Cape Rachado, also known as Tanjung Tuan, is a historic lighthouse, forest reserve with secluded



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beaches and patches of mangrove swamps, a bird watching spot, and in 1606, the site of a significant naval battle between the Dutch and Portuguese.

The PD Ostrich Show Farm and Aquarium located at the 9th mile of the Port Dickson beach road would be a fascinating and educational visit for children. Besides ostrich, the farm also has a large number of peacocks, pheasants, jungle fowls, monkeys and farm animals. Visitors can ride and feed the ostriches for a fee, while at the restaurant, they can try some ostrich meat cooked a variety of ways.

For military buffs, Port Dickson's Army Museum is a great place to look at army regalia, weapons, equipment, and even explore the insides of common military vehicles. The outdoor premise has several decommissioned military vehicles on display, while the indoor museum has dioramas and exhibits of Malaysia's military history. Don't miss exploring the underground tunnel that replicates subterranean passageways used by soldiers in the past.

Other equally interesting attractions at Port Dickson are Wan Loong Temple which pays homage to oriental deities such as the Goddess of Mercy and the Monkey King; the megalith stones and tombs of ancient warriors at Pengkalan Kempas; Teluk Pelanduk where one can do a spot of fishing from the wooden pier; and Fort Lukut Museum with artifacts of the town's tin mining days.

For evening entertainment by the sea, nothing beats a nice spot at PD Waterfront, the town's lifestyle and food centre. Along its promenade are sea-fronting restaurants and cafes, perfect to while away the last hours of the day.

Modern Port Dickson has much more to offer, and in some ways, much less, too. While progress had taken away some of the charm that the older generation remember it for, the economic boom right up to the end of the 1990s had spilled its fair share of wealth along these touristic shores, making Port Dickson a worthy destination to check out.

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MALAYSIA TOURISM PROMOTION BOARD OR TOURISM MALAYSIA is an agency under the Ministry of Tourism & Culture, Malaysia. Tourism Malaysia focuses on the specific task of promoting Malaysia at all levels. Since its inception, Tourism Malaysia has grown by leaps and bounds and it has emerged as a major player in the international tourism scene. In 2013, Malaysia registered 25.7 million tourist arrivals and RM65.4 billion in receipts, making tourism its second largest foreign exchange earner and the sixth highest contributor to its Gross National Income (GNI).

Malaysia is celebrating its fourth **VISIT MALAYSIA YEAR (VMY) in 2014** with the theme "Celebrating 1Malaysia Truly Asia". The VMY 2014 promotional campaign has started in 2013 with a series of year-long special events and activities leading to VMY 2014. It will contribute to the Government's target to receive 36 million tourist arrivals and RM168 billion in receipts by 2020, as outlined in the Malaysia Tourism Transformation Plan (MTTP) 2020.



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